

FOOTPRINTS – ‘TOUCH OF HOPE’ February 2025

Dear supporters,

May I wish you a belated Happy New Year – *Sretna nova godina!* Thank you all for your ongoing support - welcome to our Winter newsletter, which includes **several opportunities for you to get involved in a practical way.**

As I write, the ceasefire in Gaza is holding and as in the Ukraine conflict, we pray on for justice and peace. When the violence eventually stops in both regions, community peace building teams can begin their work. There is so much to learn from organisations like the ‘Centre for Non-Violence and Human Rights’ in Osijek with whom we worked initially in the 1990’s. Likewise we have almost thirty years of experience in ‘Touch of Hope’ of healing the hurts of war.

Forthcoming workshop

In Croatia, Serbia and Bosnia Herzegovina, the work is never ending. Participant feedback after our workshop on ‘Non-Violent Communication’ (NVC) showed they valued the ‘Communication’ component the most highly. So we are planning a two-session follow-up workshop on ‘**Restorative Circles**’ (RC) which will encourage people to come together to discuss and resolve conflicts through dialogue. It will be open to all previous participants, and any others with NVC experience. We hope the first session will be this autumn.

SUPPORTER OPPORTUNITIES

Meet Snježana in the UK

Firstly, may I warmly welcome Methodist Minister Revd Helen Lawson who is now the coordinator at Barnes Close (re-named “THE GREENHOUSE at Barnes Close”.) Helen attends our meetings and is keen to promote our work via the ‘Community for Reconciliation’ (CfR).

- Helen is planning a members’ and friends’ weekend at “THE GREENHOUSE” focusing on ‘Touch of Hope’, on **October 3rd-5th 2025**. Great news is our Croatian worker Snježana will be a guest speaker! More details nearer the time but **please save the date.**
- Snjezana has a few extra days in the UK either side of the weekend so we’re working on a programme for her. **Please contact me ASAP if you’d like to host an event with Snježana.**

Come on a 'Pilgrimage'

A few years ago, a highly successful 'pilgrimage' was made to Osijek and Vukovar; participants gained a greater understanding of the issues people face after the conflict in the 1990s, and the value of community-led peace initiatives.

- We would like to repeat this, possibly including Serbia and/or Bosnia Herzegovina as well. We hope to travel in the **spring of 2026**, using cheap flights direct to Osijek, and visit for 5-7 days - ample opportunity to meet Touch of Hope workshop participants, time to experience a workshop, and meet local peace activists.
- We will promote this during "THE GREENHOUSE" weekend. I anticipate it being a very popular trip. **I will communicate dates and costs as soon as they are known.**

Finances

During 2024 we had £3892.61p in donations for which we are very grateful! Our expenses amounted to £4407.18p, largely for the workshop we held last year. To date, **our funds stand at £11,625.54p**. The two forthcoming 'Restorative Circles' workshops will cost £9000.

We'd also like to commence another cycle of our 6 basic workshops but that will cost another £25,000 in total.

- **Please pray** as we apply to trusts for this large sum!
- Could you assist by **organising a fund-raising event?**
- Or if you could **consider a donation** at this time, that would be a great help. A Gift Aid form is attached with your covering email (Cheques payable to **CFR Footprints**, please send cheques/Gift Aid forms to me **at 62 Copewood Avenue, Nuneaton CV11 4TG.**)

Getting my book published

My book "IN SPITE OF DIFFERENCES" is complete. It tells how I became involved with 'Bench we Share' and 'Touch of Hope'; about the workshops, and lessons we have learned about reconciliation.

- Please pray I can find a publisher. It's a complex and frustrating process. If you have any experience in this sphere, including e-publishing, **please get in touch.** I'd value your advice.
- Likewise can you **help me archive** over 30 years-worth of materials?

Healing the hurts of war in the UK

Here in the West Midlands there are many people who have fled war-torn countries and are suffering from PTSD. I often think they could benefit from our 'Touch of Hope' workshop materials, such as 'Health and Healing', 'Communication Skills', 'Dealing with Our Wounds', and 'Identity'.

- Do you have previous experience of working with refugees e.g. hosting a Ukrainian family? Do you know any refugees who would be interested in participating in our workshops on conflict resolution and healing the hurts of war? **I would be keen to hear from you!**

PERSONALLY SPEAKING...

Roger Beckett

Roger was a faithful supporter of 'Touch of Hope', and a member at Rugby Methodist Church Centre. Sadly, Roger died before Christmas. We thank God for Roger's life, and ask Him to comfort Roger's family at this time.

"Like Father, like Son!"

My son Dr. Mark Fowle works at Rugby School. He also knows Osijek! Years ago, he spent part of his teenage work experience there as a guest of 'Bench We Share', seeing community peace building in action. Several years later, he wrote his PhD thesis on 'Community peace-building in Vukovar'.

Now, through our local worker Snježana, Mark has set up a link between Rugby School and a secondary school in Osijek, and hopes to develop exchange visits. Watch this space!

I am, as always, available to speak at your church or organisation. Please contact me via clivefowle1@gmail.com or on **07817 057963**. Thank you again for all your support.

In peace,

Revd. Clive Fowle